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MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION *of* SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Statement by the Michigan Association of School Administrators on State Mandated School Retention Policies

The Michigan Association of School Administrators opposes House Bills 5111 and 5144 as written. The proposed legislation and implementation strategies are incomplete solutions that have the potential to leave students at risk. The legislation is focused on retaining students rather than supporting schools to implement sound intervention policies that target literacy development. We have the following concerns:

1. We believe that ALL state reading proficiency policies should be built on **Identification and Intervention Strategies** rather than incomplete retention solutions. The proposed legislation does not provide school leaders with the additional intervention tools they need to support students in meeting the proficiency benchmarks. By focusing on intervention strategies and investing in those strategies, Michigan can set its students on a more certain path to success. Successful state policies support reading proficiency through tools like:
 - Additional instructional support outside of the regular school day
 - Developing summer reading programs
 - Multiple, evidence-based, effective interventions (MTSS)
 - Individualized instruction plans for struggling readers
 - Attaining effective language and reading teachers/coaches
 - Parental accountability for student attendance
 - Implementing home reading programs
 - Parental notification of difficulties/interventions
 - Continued support of pre-school access
 - Year round schooling
2. The legislation, as drafted, **ignores the national data** that exists by focusing on retaining students rather than on investing in sound strategies that target literacy development. According to information developed by the Education Commission of the States (ECS), a total of 32 states have policies in statute aimed at improving 3rd grade reading proficiency and less than half of those states have mandatory retention policies.

Of the states that have mandatory retention policies, ALL provide intervention support. In fact, the state which Michigan's legislation attempts to emulate, Florida, invests more than \$100 million annually to help their school districts implement intervention strategies. Last year, Florida allocated more than \$130 million towards reading intervention.

3. The legislation as written also contains **implementation challenges**. The current state assessment used to determine proficiency in 3rd grade is not given until fall of the student's 4th grade year. The proposed legislation is impossible to enforce given Michigan's testing window.
4. **Research** on retention policies is "at best" mixed. Our concerns are that research shows that less than half of retained students meet promotion standards after repeating a grade. Studies also indicate that retention is the second greatest predictor of school dropout; a child that is retained one year is almost twice as likely to dropout as non-retained students. The information that exists on this subject clearly shows that Michigan should move away from, rather than "double down," on a solution that has the potential of leaving more students at risk.

In order to ensure that all students are proficient in reading by the third grade, the legislature must implement and support sound strategies that target literacy development rather than simply holding students back. We ask that you oppose the retention policies found in House Bills 5111 and 5144 and redirect your legislative efforts towards sound intervention policies that will benefit Michigan students.